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The Use of the Instruments of National Power
in the 20th Century

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American statesmen in this century have made use of a variety of instruments of national power in the pursuit of what they identified as important national interests. By the end of the 19th century, the United States had emerged as a global power with a thriving economy looking for overseas markets, a mature political system which had weathered the test of the Civil War, and a national ethos which stressed democracy and economic opportunity. As the beneficiaries of our geographic situation, we avoided the wars and intrigues of Europe while expanding across North America. With our defeat of Spain in 1898, the United States seemed to serve notice to the world that it was ready to play on a larger stage. Our military successes against Spain reinforced the notion that we could and would use our military strength to further our interests abroad. McKinley's successors in this century had confidence that if necessary, they could call on capable military forces to protect and further our interests abroad.

The Military Instrument: World War I and Vietnam

While we had prospered as a nation by avoiding the conflicts of Europe since 1815, the coming of the Great War in 1914 presented a real dilemma for President Wilson and for the American people. As war in Europe progressed, it became increasingly difficult for us to avoid being drawn into the conflict, either to protect our own rights and interests as a sovereign power, or to use our strength to influence what we regarded as a desirable outcome. President Wilson reflected the distaste of most Americans for being dragged into Europe's war,

but as a man of vision, he recognized that it was in our national interest to try to shape the outcome to prevent the conditions for conflict from ever rising again to threaten global harmony. Thus when Wilson eventually decided to commit US forces to the war, his purpose was not only to assist our democratic allies but also to provide the United States with the right to help shape the post war order.

While Americans would have preferred to stay out of the conflict and while modern students of the period may question our involvement, the soldier heading to France and Belgium in 1917 had the support and encouragement of an overwhelming majority of his fellow countrymen. Wilson carefully outlined his war aims in his "Fourteen Points" speech before Congress in January 1918, and the thought of going on a crusade in a "war to end war" gave focus to the national effort. Wilson had used the military instrument of national power both to protect what he regarded as our rights and interests and to establish a firm basis for a claim to leadership in the international community in the post war era. The predominant position of the United States, and Wilson in particular, at Versailles, suggests that the use of our military forces did indeed achieve our national objectives of the moment. The failure of the Versailles settlement and the ultimate failure of the League of Nations was the outcome of Wilson's inability to manage the isolationist Senate. Thus the failure of our political leadership to agree on what our post war objectives were had the ultimate effect of negating what had been the successful use of military power in 1917-1918.

While our national interests and objectives seemed clear to Americans in 1917, our involvement in Vietnam stands in contrast. Many Americans felt that the use of the military instrument of national power was incorrect and that our objectives were unclear, while the military felt that unrealistic constraints were imposed on combat operations due to political considerations both at home and abroad. Our attempt to impose a military solution to what was essentially a political problem imposed costs which were simply greater than the apparent value of the objective- the support of a non-Communist government in South Vietnam. Perhaps we have learned several lessons from our Vietnam experience including the need to have a clear public understanding of our interests and goals in contemplating the use of military force. If anything, we have also learned something about the limitations involved in depending on the military instrument of power to achieve our ends.

The Economic Instrument: Dollar Diplomacy and the Marshall Plan

The maturation of the United States as a global power in this century was reinforced by a new sense of economic strength which not only underpinned our military effort but also provided our leaders with a new range of tools for advancing our influence overseas. As the United States sought new markets abroad at the end of the 19th century, our diplomatic efforts increasingly focussed on achieving

situations of advantage for American business. With the acquisition of the Philippines and the annexation of Hawaii in 1898, the United States became a Pacific power and Americans began to see commercial opportunities in East Asia. China was an area of potential opportunity for American businessmen and it was therefore one of the testing grounds for the "Dollar Diplomacy" of the Taft Administration.

The United States had earlier outlined the "Open Door" policy regarding China, stressing that China should not be divided up into spheres of influence but should be preserved as a market accessible to all trading nations. Unfortunately, our lofty objectives defied the political realities of the time as the European powers and Japan were progressively establishing themselves in the coastal provinces of China. In order to counter this trend, the Taft administration tried to apply "Dollar Diplomacy" to the situation it found in China, insisting on American participation in new Chinese loan issues. Taft discovered that American businessmen were reluctant to risk valuable dollars in questionable investments so far from home. Indeed our actions and our rhetoric had the effect of accelerating the process of carving up China as Russia and Japan, former enemies in 1904-05, joined together to resist what they perceived as unhelpful American interference. Since the "Open Door" policy was not to be backed up by the use or the threat of military force, it did not prevent the further breakup of China. "Dollar Diplomacy" as applied in China didn't work.

In contrast, the economic instrument was quite successful in furthering our national objectives in the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. Faced with the challenge of increasing Communist influence in the nations of Europe devastated by the war, the Truman Administration decided to propose a massive assistance program to speed European recovery and thus lay the foundations for political independence and stability. Embodied in the European Relief Program or the Marshall Plan, this assistance program was proposed by the Administration and passed by Congress in the Spring of 1948. Over a three-year period some \$10.25 billion was funneled into Europe, providing the basis for European post-war recovery. The westward surge of Communism was thus halted and the foundations of a new collective security arrangement, NATO, were established as the direct result of the successful application of the economic instrument of statecraft, which reinforced the Truman Administration's political initiatives in Europe. Subsequent Administrations have continued to develop the use of foreign assistance, both economic and military, as an important component of our foreign policy.

The Use of "Public Diplomacy:" Wilson and Reagan

While the term "Public Diplomacy" has found favor in the past decade as a means of describing a nation's information efforts, the concept has been with us throughout this century. As Americans saw themselves as a nation with global interests after 1898, they also regarded their

political and economic institutions as a source of inspiration to others. We attempted to replicate our political structures in Havana and Manila. Presidents who had been adept at appealing for public support for their programs at home began to find opportunities to reach out to even wider audiences abroad. Teddy Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" of 1908-1909 not only spread the message of our commitment of a "modern, first class navy," but it also passed on messages about the country, its people and its ideals.

Wilson's messages to the American public on the eve of our entry into the Great War were also messages to the Europeans: we wanted to avoid war but would not hold back from the fray if our interests were threatened. After our declaration of War, Wilson's public messages conveyed his vision of a post-war landscape based on "peace without victory." In his public speaking campaign to secure support for Senate ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson tried to share with his American audience his vision for the future of Europe, a vision not shared by the isolationist members of the Senate. Thrust into international prominence by the Great War, Wilson was perhaps the first modern president to appreciate the importance of what we now call public diplomacy.

Ronald Reagan is often cited as the most effective master of modern media. As a skilled practitioner in the art of public communication, it is no surprise that Reagan attached considerable importance to public diplomacy. Organizations such as the National Endowment for

Democracy were effective in spreading the basic message about American institutions overseas. It would appear however, that the success of the Reagan Administration in public diplomacy abroad did not quite match the President's own mastery of the media at home. Under Charles Z. Wick, the US Information Agency was seen by some observers as having abandoned its traditional "let the facts speak for themselves" approach to public information. The Agency was seen as an increasingly politicized institution as exemplified by its blacklisting of "liberals" which prevented them from participating in overseas USIA programs. While the Reagan era is seen as the period of triumph of American ideas and ideals in the Cold war with the USSR, questions will remain about the role of US public diplomacy in achieving that end.

Conclusion: Using a Range of Options

The reality of any situation dictates that the President and his advisors must consider a range of options in choosing the appropriate instruments of power to further our interests and objectives. While we can lament the increasing complexity of today's world for the strategist, it is also true that a broader range of options is available to address these issues. The "Dollar Diplomacy" of the Taft Administration might have been more effective if sizeable amounts of government rather than private capital could have been directed to the problem. We now have a tradition of foreign assistance at the

national level and an experienced bureaucracy to shape and direct it. Likewise, public diplomacy efforts have been institutionalized in our government to take our message to people overseas.

Thus the military, economic and information instruments (along with other instruments not addressed in this paper such as diplomacy and covert action), must be used together as each situation dictates in order to achieve the best possible chance for the success of our policies. The challenge to the strategist is to correctly weigh our interests and determine which combination of tools is needed to get the job done.